

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVE – TEACHER

Content Area: Government

Grade Level: 8

Objective Statement:

Students will be able to explain the basic structure of the American democratic system, including the relationships among the branches of government, how power is divided and shared, and the electoral and legislative processes. In addition, students will be able to research how laws have affected different groups of people in the past, craft an argument on both sides of a current legislative issue, and make recommendations for legislative action based upon an analysis of potential impact.

Rationale:

The 8th grade government curriculum begins with an in-depth focus on the American political system, particularly the electoral and legislative processes. Students need foundational knowledge about the American democratic system and the processes by which we elect our representatives and pass legislation. However, as a department we have made a conscious effort to enrich our curriculum so that as students are learning content, they are making connections to their lives and their communities. The second part of the objective is about students applying what they're learning to develop informed positions and problem-solve real issues. Given this fall's presidential election, we have an opportunity to study American government "in action". In the spring, we will expand our study to systems of government around the world, both historical (democracy in ancient Athens, the Roman republic, socialism in the USSR) and modern (the parliamentary system of the United Kingdom, the recent political revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya). My other SLO focuses on this content.

Aligned Standards:

This objective is aligned to the Rhode Island Grade Span Expectations (GSEs) for Civics & Government and Historical Perspectives/R.I. History: Grades 5-8 and the CCSS for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Grades 6-8:

C&G 2 (7-8) –1: Students demonstrate an understanding of United States government (local, state, national) by...

- a. identifying the functions of the three branches of government; and analyzing and describing the interrelationship among the branches (i.e., checks and balances/ cause and effect, separation of powers)
- b. explaining how and why power is divided and shared among the levels of government (federalism)
- c. tracing the process of how an idea transforms into a bill and then becomes a law

C&G 3 (7-8) –2: Students demonstrate an understanding of how individuals and groups exercise (or are denied) their rights and responsibilities by...

- a. identifying an issue, proposing solutions, and developing an action plan to resolve the issue

- b. identifying and explaining how an action taken by an individual or a group impacts the rights of others
- c. identifying the impact of an historic court case

C&G 4 (7-8) -1: Students demonstrate an understanding of political systems and political processes by...

- e. recognizing multiple perspectives on historical or current controversial issues

C&G 5 (7-8) -3: Students demonstrate an understanding of how the choices we make impact and are impacted by an interconnected world by...

- a. making predictions as to the effects of personal consumer, environmental, communication, and eventual political choices (e.g., hybrid cars, local v. imported)
- b. summarizing a significant situation; proposing and defending actions to be taken or not taken (e.g., pollution, consumption, conservation)

HP 3 (7-8) -1: Students demonstrate an understanding of how the past frames the present by...

- a. analyzing and reporting on a social movement from its inception (including historical causes), its impacts on us today, and its implications for the future
- b. evaluating alternative courses of action, (keeping in mind the context of the time), ethical considerations, and the interest of those affected by the decision, and determining the long- and short-term consequences (e.g., Post WWII use of Narragansett Bay - tourism vs. oil refinery)

RH.6-8.2. Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

RH.6-8.7. Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

RH.6-8.8. Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

Students:

This objective applies to the 77 students in my 4 sections of 8th grade Social Studies

Interval of Instruction:

This is a year-long course, but this objective applies to the fall semester of the 2012-2013 school year. My other objective focuses on the big ideas of the spring semester.

Baseline Data:

I administered a baseline assessment during the first week of school to gauge students' incoming content knowledge. I found that most students could identify basic facts about American *history* (American Revolution, Declaration of Independence, etc.), but lacked basic knowledge about our modern system of *government*. This is in line with what I have observed in past years. In addition, I administered an informational writing prompt (in response to a piece of informational text) to gauge students' reading and writing skills, as they will be required to do quite a bit of reading and writing of informational text in this course. Based on that, I identified students with superior literacy skills. Finally, I reviewed students' final exams from 7th grade Social Studies and cross-

referenced them with the results of the baseline assessments. I found that 19 students performed well both on their 7th grade final exam (B+ or higher) *and* the beginning-of-year writing prompt, indicating that they are well-prepared to access the 8th grade government curriculum.

Target(s):

- 1) All students will pass the midterm exam with a score of 70% or better. In addition, 40% of students will pass with a score of 85% or better.
- 2) All students (77/77) will meet the minimum requirements for the Campaign Advisor Project. In addition, 25% (approximately 19/77) of students will exceed the minimum requirements for the CAP.

Rationale for Target(s):

- 1) I administered the same assessment (with very minor differences) last year and found that 95% of students were able to pass with a score of 70% or better. In addition, approximately 35% of students passed with a score of 85% or better. As a group, this year's 8th graders are not markedly different from last year's in terms of their preparedness. Therefore, I am confident that I can increase these percentages by at least 5% this year.
- 2) The requirements of the Campaign Advisor Project are rigorous. Therefore, my objective is to ensure that every student completes all of the requirements. I do expect many students to exceed the minimum requirements, but because we have never used this project or the rubric, it is very difficult to predict how many. However, because the project requires a fair amount of reading (often complex, informational text) and writing, I expect students' literacy skills to have an impact on their ability to demonstrate understanding. Therefore, I created a higher target for those 19 students who were successful on the 7th grade final exam *and* demonstrated superior literacy skills on the beginning-of-year writing prompt.

Evidence Source(s):

- 1) Midterm Exam: This exam will be focused on the American democratic system, with an emphasis on the electoral and legislative processes. It will include multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions on the full range of content from the fall semester. It was developed last year by the three 8th grade Government teachers and approved by our Department Head.
- 2) Campaign Advisor Project: For this project, students will become an expert on an issue relevant to the 2012 presidential race. Issues that they can choose among include healthcare, immigration, education, same sex marriage, global warming, gun control, or national security.

To become an “expert”, students must:

- a. Research the history of that issue in the United States, including statistics, court rulings, public opinion, etc.
- b. Identify potential actions by the executive, judicial, and legislative branches regarding this issue.
- c. Analyze how the issue or law has affected different groups of people in the past.
- d. Research each candidate’s current position on the issue as well as the historic position of their political party (if applicable).
- e. Summarize two (or more) conflicting perspectives on the issue.
- f. Make predictions about the impact of two different courses of action and make a policy recommendation.
- g. Draft talking points for the candidate of their choosing that addresses counter-arguments.
- h. Analyze how Rhode Island would be affected if this candidate was elected and enacted the recommended policy (or if the other candidate was elected and the recommended policy was *not* enacted).

Students can choose to present their project as a written portfolio, a tri-fold poster with oral presentation, or a webpage.

Administration:

- 1) The midterm exam will be administered in class at the end of the second quarter.
- 2) The Campaign Advisor Project will be introduced in mid-September and is due on the last day of class before the holiday break.

Scoring:

- 1) Scoring of all 8th grade final exams will be shared by the three 8th grade Social Studies teachers using the scoring guide and constructed response rubric that we developed with the assessment last year.
- 2) Campaign Advisor Projects will be scored by the classroom teacher, using the rubric developed by the 8th grade team in consultation with our Department Head. However, we will score the first 10% of projects as a team, in order to norm ourselves, as this is the first time we are using the rubric.